



# SPECIAL EDITION



Issue 5, 2014

## Former SSD Student, Employee Brings High Expectations



Ernest E. Garrett III

With a résumé that resembles a short novel more than a sheet of paper, there doesn't seem to be much Ernest E. Garrett III hasn't accomplished. His newest addition to his LinkedIn page might just be the capstone of an already impressive career.

In July, Garrett became the first superintendent who is deaf of the Missouri School for the Deaf (MSD). With a background that features

numerous degrees and a litany of awards and high-ranking posts with local, state, and national organizations, Garrett believes the superintendent position will be a good fit.

"I feel like my diverse academic and professional background have all prepared me for this," Garrett said. "My previous positions were all relevant and connected in one way or another and brought me full circle."

Garrett previously served as the executive director of the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and serves on numerous state and national committees and boards. But his early relationship with SSD is one that will not be soon forgotten despite the large-scale acclamations.

Garrett began receiving services from SSD when he became deaf at age 2, eventually finding a home in the Brentwood School District.

"My parents heard about the deaf and hard of hearing program at Brentwood School District," Garrett said about the program that was designed for all deaf and hard-of-hearing students. "The life-changing meeting happened for me at the Individualized Education Program meeting there. Someone brought up the idea of an interpreter. I didn't know what an interpreter was, and I said 'no, thank you.' But my parents said 'he will have an interpreter,' and that was final."

Garrett remained in the SSD program at Brentwood through his graduation from high school in 1999.

"Ernest was my student when he was in middle school and high school," said Kathy Williams, who is now an area coordinator with SSD. "He was always a good student; however, his passion to go on and serve the deaf and hard-of-hearing population has been remarkable."

"At Brentwood, I came to an awareness of who I am as a deaf individual," Garrett said. "My experiences there helped me see the big picture. All of my experiences since then have helped me get where I am."

After high school, Garrett earned multiple degrees, eventually finding his calling to become a social worker. After one year at the Wisconsin School for the Deaf, Garrett returned to SSD in 2007 as a social worker.

"School social workers are well equipped to serve the needs of students," he said. "The challenges that are addressed need to consider the whole child. And I feel with my social work background, I'm motivated and equipped to consider the whole child in my next position."

Not only is Garrett the first deaf superintendent at MSD, he's the first African-American superintendent of the school. And he is believed to be just the second deaf black superintendent nationally.

"In the black deaf community, we have few leaders," Garrett said. "It's very humbling. I'm very conscious of it and it's not a position that I take lightly. But it's really about giving students the ability to succeed. And I'm looking forward to that challenge."

The Missouri School for the Deaf has a rich history within the state. Founded in 1851, MSD serves students from kindergarten through 12th grade, and includes vocational training programs as well.

Garrett believes his drive for success will serve MSD as well as it has served him.

"You have to have high expectations," Garrett said. "I'm a living and breathing example of what high expectations on a deaf or hard-of-hearing child can become. For me, it's something I always say: 'Deaf people can. Period.'" ■

# Disability History & Awareness Month

October is Disability History and Awareness Month in Missouri. Here's a list of resources to learn more about how to raise awareness in your community.

■ **Materials available through SSD's Family & Community Resource Center:**  
<http://bit.ly/ssdfcrc>

■ **Toolkit from State of Missouri:**  
<http://bit.ly/toolkitmo>

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## Honor SSD Staff or Community Members *for* Making a Difference in Your Child's Education

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• *Nomination Deadline is Dec. 5* •

SSD has developed a wide range of award programs to recognize staff and community members for their work to benefit students. Recipients are honored annually at the SSD Salutes Banquet.

Visit <http://bit.ly/ssdwards> to download nomination forms. For more information, contact Wes Buchek at [wbuchek@ssdmo.org](mailto:wbuchek@ssdmo.org) or 314.989.8102.



### Building Block Award

The SSD Building Block Award honors outstanding paraprofessionals from around the district. Nominees for the Building Block Award are judged on their skills and on their dedication to students.

### Key to the Classroom Award

With more than 2,500 teachers, SSD boasts a remarkable wealth of excellent educators. The Key to the Classroom/Teacher of the Year Award recognizes the achievements of these dedicated individuals. One Key to the Classroom recipient will be selected as the district's Teacher of the Year. Nominees for the award must be classroom teachers who are employed during the current school year.

### Lasting Impression Award

The Lasting Impression Award recognizes the achievements of dedicated individuals, working both in and outside of the classroom, who stand out in their role at SSD. The Lasting Impression Award is open to all SSD staff except teachers or paraprofessionals.

### Special Ambassador Award

The Special Ambassador Award is the highest recognition given by SSD. The award is presented to individuals or groups who demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to the students and/or staff of SSD. ■

# Building Project Updates

Renovations and building projects continue to move forward at SSD schools including Ackerman School, Neuwoehner High School, Northview High School and North Technical High School.

These improvements were made possible by voters' investment in SSD and its students through the passage of Proposition S in 2012. Visit [http://bit.ly/prop\\_s](http://bit.ly/prop_s) to see the latest progress updates and photos.

At Neuwoehner, a new entrance is being built. Over the summer, a new vehicular traffic pattern was established and parking was expanded to improve safety for students entering and exiting buses and other vehicles.

At the end of July, SSD held a groundbreaking ceremony for the new building that will replace the current Northview High School. The event celebrated the community's investment in SSD and the students it serves. ■



Pictured (from left): John Cary, SSD superintendent; Dr. Dan Cuneo, SSD Board of Education president; Stephanie Valleroy, Northview High School principal; Wendi Pendergrass, SSD executive director of schools; Paul Bauer, SSD assistant superintendent for learning and assessment

## SSD Staff Member Honored by North County Inc.



Congratulations to **DeAndria Player** for being named one of North County Inc.'s 30 Leaders in their Thirties. She is an SSD area coordinator in the Jennings School District, overseeing five elementary schools.

Player has participated in the Missouri Leadership for Excellence, Achievement, and Development (MoLEAD) leadership training, as well as numerous districtwide advisory committees. She has helped pilot the new performance-based evaluation system for SSD teachers and serves as a mentor to administrative interns.

Before her time at Jennings, Player was a special education teacher with SSD in the University City School District. ■

## PIZZA WITH A PURPOSE

Visit the California Pizza Kitchen on Tuesdays during October to have 20 percent of your check donated to the Special Education Foundation. Simply bring the enclosed flier and present it to your server. Visit [www.sef-stl.org/cpk](http://www.sef-stl.org/cpk) for additional details and copies of the flier.

  
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**VISION:** Partners for every student's success

**VALUES:** student success • collaboration  
• integrity • stewardship • continuous improvement • equity

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## NEWS FROM SSD



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# COMING UP @ SSD

## Event Offers Families One-Stop Access to Autism Resources

SSD's Parent Education and Diversity Awareness Program will sponsor an Autism-Asperger-PDD Resource Fair on Oct. 8 to help parents and community members learn more about autism.



The event is scheduled for 4–7 p.m. Oct. 8 at SSD Central Office, 12110 Clayton Road in Town & Country. It will feature information about programs and resources from SSD and other community agencies, including the Department of Mental Health St. Louis Regional Office, the Recreation Council of Greater St. Louis and the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Resource Center.

The event is free and open to the public. Registration is encouraged but is not required to attend. For more information, call 314.989.8194 (711 Deaf/HOH).